

**NAHMAD CONTEMPORARY**  
980 MADISON AVENUE THIRD FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10075  
646 449 9118

**RICHARD PRINCE: FASHION**  
MARCH 3- APRIL 18, 2015



## Richard Prince Re-Appropriates Beauty in 'Fashion' Exhibition at Nahmad Contemporary

Forbes Lifestyle | Adam Lehrer | March 4, 2015



*Installation view of Richard Prince: Fashion at Nahmad Contemporary. Credit: Tom Powel Imaging, courtesy of the gallery*

What is authorship in this modern world?

That is the question that massively successful painter and photographer Richard Prince has always asked in his work. His exhibition *Fashion* that opened last night at Nahmad Contemporary wasn't exactly new territory for Prince; the pieces consist of re-photographs of glamorous head shots of (by society's standards) beautiful models that Prince took from 1982 to 1984. However, it seems that Prince's re-appropriation of imagery feels more relevant today than it ever has at any point over the artist's 30-year career.

The Internet is re-appropriation. We are all guilty of it. Anyone that loves art, music, fashion, film or design uses their Instagram or their Tumblr pages to show (usually) other peoples' work that they feel somehow represents who they are. If you put up a Picasso piece on your Instagram, you are expressing that Picasso is important to you. Is that art? You could make an argument for or against it. However you feel about the sensation of digital re-appropriation, it's undeniable that Prince is the profit. When he decided to re-photograph four photographs taken from the *New York Times*, he predicted a massive shift in the ideals surrounding ownership of artistic output.

From sampling in hip-hop music to the videotaping of your favorite movies and shows to the art you post pictures of on your Pinterest pages, Richard Prince was the first to see the potential that came out of re-creating work from low culture and shifting it into high culture: "He has the ability to take these pop-cultural images and show them in a new light," says show attendee and art manager Edgar Batiste, "He has a sort of quirk, and a presence, that allows him to remain relevant."

Though Prince in many ways was the harbinger of the Internet era, he also appears to comment on how some things stay exactly the same: namely, advertising. No matter how advanced our delivery systems of media become, the media that is delivered never seems to change: beauty, sex and more sex. By re-appropriating these types of images, Prince forces us to confront that ugly notion: "When he started dealing with tear sheets and advertising, it was the

same crap back then,” says gallery attendee **Andrew Lucre**, “The crap hasn’t changed, it’s just a different set of tools that you use to deliver it.”

The show itself was well assembled: the gallery’s huge amounts of negative space allowed the re-photographed images to assault you on all fronts. Looking at the pieces, you see beauty. But Prince makes you question your own assertions of beauty. Is beauty really subjective? Or are we programmed from birth to see beauty as it meets a pre-determined societal standard?

If you look at the images up close, one will be overwhelmed by the very act of seduction that the pieces emulate: “Prince’s intention is to catch seduction in the act, to savor his own fascination with such images even as they manipulate him via insinuated desire,” says art critic and historian Hal Foster in the 1983 text *The Expressive Fallacy*.

All of the pieces at the exhibition feature the models’ views being obstructed in some way. Though you can see her, she does not see you. The sensation that follows this realization is one of heartbreak. Though these women meet society’s standards of beauty, her inability, or perhaps her refusal, to see you high lights the fact that you might not meet those same standards. Prince is able to find irony and humor in this great juxtaposition; we critique and question the beauty of indisputably beautiful images and never do we ever focus that critique on our selves. Why? Because no one wants to acknowledge that they might not be conventionally beautiful.

Prince’s aesthetic has turned into our world. There are very few artists that predicted what the future might look like more than him. In *Fashion*, Nahmad Contemporary taps into the essential aspects of Prince’s work: re-appropriation, beauty and satire.

The exhibition runs until April 18. For more info, head to the gallery’s website.